Testimony
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Planning & Development Committee
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SUPPORT – HB-5096, AN ACT INCREASING THE THRESHOLD REQUIRED FOR PASSAGE OF UNFUNDED MANDATES

Unfunded mandates continue to drive up local costs beyond the control of our small towns and cities. During these difficult fiscal times, local budgets are stretched thin, revenues are declining and costs continue to escalate. Connecticut must provide towns and cities with relief from unfunded mandates and refrain from adopting any new unfunded mandates, however well-intentioned. Failure to provide municipalities with meaningful mandate relief and continuing to impose new unfunded mandates on towns will force increases in property taxes and/or cuts to local services and programs.

Unfortunately, too often, the actual fiscal impact of a mandate is unclear until legislation is adopted and towns begin struggling to implement the requirements. The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) therefore urges *support* for **HB-5096**, which will shine a spotlight on the costs associated with unfunded mandates by requiring any unfunded mandate to be adopted by a 2/3 majority of the General Assembly. This will help ensure that lawmakers carefully consider the fiscal impact of legislation before imposing another unfunded mandate on property taxpayers.

Although Connecticut requires fiscal notes to identify any municipal impact, this is done after a bill has been approved by the committee and is moving forward in the process. In addition, due to the short timeframe for scheduling a public hearing following the publication of legislation, it is difficult for towns to fully assess the costs associated with a proposal to include on the record in testimony. Also, many bills are amended in committee or on the floor in ways that may increase municipal costs. Although fiscal notes are prepared on such amendments, there is little opportunity for municipalities to provide input on actual implementation costs at this point in the process.

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